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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between parent involvement in elementary school and student achievement. Subjects were randomly selected students (from second through fifth grade classrooms in a West Virginia elementary school), and their parents. Parents completed the Parent Involvement Check-up scale, and student achievement was measured by the Stanford Achievement Test. Findings indicated that parent involvement contributed to greater academic gains by their children. Recommendations for increasing greater parental involvement in schools were made based on the findings. (A copy of the Parent Involvement Check-Up Scale is appended. Contains 64 references.) (JPB)

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The Effects of Parent Involvement on Student Achievement

ED 424 926

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of the Graduate School

Salem – Teikyo University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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by

Vickie Lynne Luchuck

August, 1998

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to show a correlation between parent involvement and student achievement. Data presented in the *t*-tests and correlational study rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate. Children whose parents have been involved in their education have shown greater gains academically.

An abundance of literature that supports this statement identifies the types of involvement, defines the barriers, and offers proven suggestions for improving parent involvement.

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I wish to acknowledge and praise my daughter and son for their understanding and patience with me. Finally, without my aunt's undying support and thoughtfulness I would have not been able to research and study an issue that is so important to me.

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Chapter 1:
Introduction

Introduction

Parent involvement in children's education has been proclaimed for years as being a very important predictor of student achievement (Jesse, 1997). The literature and available research is consistent in showing that meaningful parent involvement results in gains in student achievement (Sattes, 1985). National organizations have placed parent involvement as a high priority within their platforms. Since seventy percent of student's waking hours, including weekends and vacations, are spent outside school the school setting (Clark, 1990) it is imperative that parents are involved in their child's education for success.

Congress, in its 1994 "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" policy legislated that partnerships be formed between families and schools. Federal Title I regulations required revised mandates for "specific family-school connections" (Epstein, 1996, p. 5) in order to obtain federal funds for programs.

The National PTA believes that strengthening the connection between families and the nation's schools is so vital that they have pushed to make it one of America's National Education Goals. The Goal declares that by the year 2000 every school in America will promote partnerships that increase parents "involvement and participation

in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children," according to Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education (National PTA, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Parents are their children's first teachers. The single most important factor in a child's achievement in school and life is the home background (Nedler, 1979). Parent involvement is critical to successful students. Effective methods of parent involvement must be implemented in schools to assure the academic success of children.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine whether parent involvement in elementary school had a positive effect on student achievement. The goal was to show whether those parents actively involved with their children's education promoted greater gains in academic achievement than those parents who did not show involvement with their children did.

Hypothesis

H_O: There were no significant gains in academics for students whose parents were involved in their education.

H_1: Children whose parents have been involved in their education have shown greater gain academically.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study: the sample was of an adequate size to obtain valid results, and the data obtained from the parent involvement likert scale were typical of parent involvement responses. It was also assumed that the SAT9 tests were a valid measure of student achievement. Additionally, it was assumed that the instruments used to analyze data were valid, and the time frame for the study was adequate.

Limitations

Limitations that may have affected the study include the following: limited population from which to select groups, inflated SAT9 test scores, or high scores on the parent involvement likert scale. The population from which the study was conducted was limited to Lumberport Elementary School, using data from likert surveys returned by parents. Inflated SAT9 scores could have been the result of excessive preparation for the tests. Teaching techniques were not considered. Over eagerness to show involvement on the part of parents could have inflated the scores on the parent involvement likert scales. Parents who have been involved were more likely to return the completed scales.

Definitions of Terms

Academic achievement – the yardstick used to measure school effectiveness (Sattes, 1985).

Parent involvement – the involvement of parents in their children's education by participating in various activities at home and at school (Jesse, 1996).

Partnership – the joining of parents and educators in various ways to promote the success of involved children (Chrispeels, 1996).

PTA – Parent Teacher Association, refers to parents and teachers who work together providing benefits for school children (National PTA, 1997).

SAT9 – Stanford Achievement Tests, edition nine.

Importance of Study

Reviewing literature and performing tests to determine whether parent involvement increases academic achievement assists in developing successful programs for students, parents, and teachers. Schools with certain federally funded programs are required to have parent involvement programs enacted; therefore, knowledge of effective parent involvement assists with successfully developed and implemented activities.

Chapter 2:
Review of the Literature

An Overview

"Common sense tells us that getting parents involved in the education of their children is a good thing." (Gullatt, 1997, p. 36) With that statement in mind, the study was undertaken to show whether parent involvement in fact does increase student's academic achievement. An abundance of research during the past decade has supported that statement. Parents who are involved with their children's education do promote greater achievement (Wherry, 1997).

Thus, the purpose of this literature review has been to define "parent involvement" and its changing paradigm to "partnership" (Jesse, 1997). Additionally, the purpose was to examine the types of parent involvement as described by researchers, analyze a well-known parent involvement framework, discuss the need for parent involvement in children's education, note the impact of positive parent involvement, list the common barriers of parent involvement, and to observe ways to increase parent involvement.

Parent Involvement Defined

Early on, parent involvement was defined primarily as parents participating in activities within the school walls, and only when wanted by the school (Coulombe,

1995). Parent involvement, according to Vandergrift and Green (1992) has two independent components, one being parents as supporters, the other component being parents as active partners.

As reforms in education have required more accountability, the definition of parent involvement has shifted to mean the active and knowledgeable involvement of parents from birth throughout the elementary and secondary education of their children. It has changed from a parent focus to family focus, from family to community agencies, and from the ever-eager parents only to the hard-to-reach or at-risk parents. Parent involvement has changed from professional (teacher or administrator) agendas to family priorities, and from a deficit view of primarily urban families to a greater emphasis on the intrinsic strengths of families (Davies, 1991).

The shift in definition has brought about the belief that most parents do really care about their children and have important perspectives about their children. Additionally, parents are capable of learning new techniques that they can use. Further, it is believed families do have strengths and many family forms do exist (Liontos, 1992). Although non-traditional families are much more common than they were forty years ago, alternative family structures of today are effective, and, thus, should be recognized as such (Jesse, 1997).

"Parental involvement is reading to preschool children. It is getting children ready for school every morning. It is volunteering at the school. It is serving on collaborative decision making committees, and it is lobbying legislatures to advocate for children" (Jesse, 1997, p. 2). Parent involvement takes many forms.

Types of Parent Involvement

Several researchers have identified types of parent involvement. Flaxman and Inger (1992, p. 3) "have identified three ways in which parents can become involved in schooling: through direct involvement in school management and choice and by being present in the schools; through participation in special parenting training programs; and through family resource and support programs."

Following this line of thought, Moore (1991) identified three approaches to parent involvement as parents as policy makers, facilitators of children's development, and as volunteers. Hester, (1989) who emphasizes communication with parents as a major component of involvement, sees involvement as parents as teachers, facilitators of children's development, and as advocates.

As is seen in most circumstances, effective parent involvement is accurately characterized as a quite powerful enabling and enhancing variable in the children's overall educational success, rather than a necessary condition in itself for success (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Providing success for all children, serving the whole child and sharing responsibility are three common themes for parental involvement as identified by Davies (1991). Further, the National Parent Teacher Association Board of Directors endorsed the three types of involvement as being: parents as the first educators in the home, parents as partners with the schools, and parents as advocates for all children and youth (National PTA, 1993).

The National PTA released six standards for parent involvement. These

research-based standards, or types of involvement, were created in alliance with other reform initiatives that encompass children's learning and success (Ramsburg, 1997).

These national standards for parent/family involvement programs are voluntary guidelines provided to help strengthen the parent and family involvement on behalf of all children in schools and other programs. The six standards, and their quality indicators, provide local schools, PTA organizations, and communities with the necessary components needed for highly effective parent/family involvement programs (National PTA, 1997).

These standards include communicating, parenting, student learning, volunteering, school decision making and advocacy, and collaborating with the community (National PTA, 1997). The standards for parent involvement were based on the six types of parent involvement identified by education researcher Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University (Ramsburg, 1997).

Epstein's Framework

Researcher Joyce Epstein's framework for parent involvement includes sample practices, or activities, that help describe involvement greater. Epstein's work also includes the challenges and results expected from implementing the six types of involvement. The six types of parent involvement are: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon, 1997).

Type one is parenting. Parenting programs assist with parenting skills and aids

in setting home conditions that will support children as students. They also help schools understand families. It is the responsibility of schools to help all families establish home environments conducive to supporting children as students. Parent education and other courses or training for parents, such as general educational development, college credit, and family literacy classes should be available. Family support programs offer assistance to families for health, nutrition, and other services. Home visits at children's vital transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school should be provided. Annual surveys help families share information and concerns with schools about their children's goals. Other activities include workshops, videotapes, and computerized telephone messages (Epstein, et al., 1997).

Parent involvement type two is communicating. Effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress are designed. Conferences are to be scheduled with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed. Language translators must be provided to assist families as needed. A regular schedule of useful notices, memos, telephone calls, newsletters, and other communications must be in place. Folders of student work are sent home on a weekly or monthly basis (Epstein, et al., 1997).

Epstein's third type of parent involvement is volunteering. Recruit and organize parent help and support through annual surveys and questionnaires. School and classroom volunteer program help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents with a variety of projects. Parent rooms or family centers provide a place for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families. Parent patrols increase student safety (Epstein, et al., 1997).

Learning at home, the fourth type of parent involvement provides information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning skills. Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade is provided, as is information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. Family participation in setting student academic goals each year and in planning for college or work is suggested. Summer learning packets provide activities for students (Epstein, et al., 1997).

Decision making, as the fifth type of parent involvement, includes families in school decisions, and helps develop parent leaders and representatives. Active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations, advisory councils for parent leadership and participation offer decision-making opportunities. Independent advocacy groups lobby for school reform and improvements. Networks link all families with parent representatives. Action teams that include a combination of parents and teachers oversee the development of the school's overall program (Epstein, et al., 1997).

The sixth type of parent involvement, as outlined by Epstein, is collaborating with the community. Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services are provided through collaboration. Further, information on community activities to link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students exhibit collaborative efforts are offered. The school community offers service to the general community by students, families, and staff

(Epstein, et al., 1997).

Epstein (1996, p. 8) stated "families do not exist in isolation but rather are linked to informal and formal networks of neighborhoods, communities, and schools from the earliest years." Children's qualities, including learning, are "influenced simultaneously, not sequentially, by multiple contacts" says Epstein (1996, p. 8). The framework's six types of involvement overlap. "It is now time to...move toward studying the interactive nature of these overlapping 'sphere's of influence'" (Ames, 1993, p. 11).

"As children's first teachers, family members have a profound and continuing effect on growth and development" (Dianda & McLaren, 1996, p. 11). Parenting skills must be taught, they are not inherent. Workshops, support programs, and specific parent training programs are needed for families (Epstein & Conners, 1993).

Communications must be two-way between home and school. "Principals can keep the connection relevant by sending out monthly calendars with suggestions for educational activities, such as 'listen to your child tell a story' or 'take your child to the library'" (Gullatt, 1997, p. 36). Using telephones in the classrooms and a monthly telephone tree dramatically improved communications at a rural school in southern West Virginia (Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997). One method of communication will not reach all homes. A variety of strategies that are adapted to the specific families of the school must be used (Liontos, 1992).

The traditional role of parent involvement has been the parent volunteer who works in the classroom or teacher's workroom. Relationships between homes and schools can be further enhanced by seeking parents to volunteer for specific activities

such as listening to students read; developing and assembling instructional materials; assisting in the library, gym, or other areas of the school; and helping during health or kindergarten screenings (Gullatt, 1997). Teachers' workloads are lessened when parents lend their skills to assist. Parents then begin to perceive teachers and the school more positively (Epstein, 1992). Parent centers created at schools train parents in parenting skills that then lead to improve volunteering skills. These trained parents become more willing to move into a teaching role (Moles, 1992)

Although not all families can participate in parent centers, all families can assist with learning at home. Parents can use a daily planner to prioritize activities and budget time for homework (Canter, 1998). Assignment and homework journals can be sent home daily (Chrisipeels, 1995). Homework not only links the school and home, it provides a daily opportunity for parents to listen to their child read, or to do paired reading (Topping & Wolfendale, 1985). Johns Hopkins University and teachers worked together to "develop home learning materials called TIPS – Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork" (Epstein & Herrick, 1991, p. 24) which link a schools' curriculum while involving parents and students in discussion. Chrispeels (1995) stated that parents are very willing to help more with a variety of home-learning activities, but that they want and need the teacher's suggestions and guidance throughout.

"Newer roles for parent participation challenge the traditional norms of home-school relationships" (Goldring & Shapira, 1995, p. 358). Parent teacher organizations have the opportunity to be decision-making or governing bodies in the schools. The PTA has been a children's advocate for decades (Cutright, 1989). Accelerated school models involve parents in the decision making process (Levin, 1987). Other activities include

being a member on a parent advisory committee, local school improvement council, or the local board of education (Cotton & Wikeland, 1989). Parents use site-based decision making skills on various committees (Jesse, 1997).

The Comer School Development model includes parents as equal participants on school planning committees. It enables staff and parents to redefine their relationships, forming partnerships (Comer, 1988).

Chrispeels (1996) describes home, school, and community as co-supporters of each other, there's going beyond the traditional role of parent involvement. Many communities realize they must provide a safe, positive, learning environment not only during school hours, but also before and after the school day to meet the needs of families (Chrispeels, 1996). Communities that function well are responsive to the needs of its citizens. The community shares its resources, cohesiveness, security, and opportunities with its members (Nettles, 1991). Before and after school programs fill some voids of the family, nevertheless, cautions Coleman (1987), they also must develop attributes that help students succeed in school and life.

Although it is unrealistic to involve all parents in all activities, effective schools involve parents with their children's education through a broad variety of activities (Wells, 1997). A greater impact on student learning has been found to occur when a comprehensive, school-wide approach to parent involvement and partnership building has been in place (Gordon, 1978). Parents do not have to be well educated to provide appropriate involvement in their children's education, but must be willing to learn and participate (Henderson, 1987).

The Benefits of Parent Involvement

Benefits of parent involvement that directly relate to students include having more positive attitudes toward school; much higher achievement, particularly in reading; higher quality, more level-appropriate work; completion of more homework in less time; and observing a closer relationship between family and school in general (Epstein, 1991). Teacher morale is higher; schools garner a better reputation, and there is greater support from businesses and families (Henderson, 1994).

Additionally, fewer students are placed in special education programs. More students maintain a positive attitude and display appropriate behavior when parents have been involved in their education. Students maintain higher graduation rates and have greater enrollment in post-secondary education (Henderson, 1994). The children of parents involved by offering frequent verbal support of learning, schools, and teachers do better in school (Clark, 1990).

Parents involved in their children's education have more confidence in the school and teachers, even themselves. Moreover, expectations of their children are higher. Parents are more likely to secure further education when involved with their children (Henderson, 1994).

Impact of Parent Involvement

Certain family practices have been significant factors contributing to children's academic success. These factors, as researched by Clark (1983), include: valuing schooling and developing a sense of pride in school, establishing specific daily and weekly family routines, establishing family roles and responsibilities, and closely

supervising and monitoring children's use of structured and unstructured time. In addition, encouraging reading, talking with children about everyday occurrences, talking with children about school contribute to academic success. Visiting the school and becoming an advocate, encouraging children and families to develop hobbies and extracurricular activities, and finally, spending quality family time together are factors that also contribute to children's academic success.

Six factors identified by Walberg (1984) which support student success as were incorporated in his "curriculum for the home". Informed parent and child conversations about everyday events are encouraged. Also encouraged was reading and discussion for leisure. Parents' should monitor and analyze television viewing. Deferment of immediate gratification to accomplish long term goals was suggested. Encouraged were many expressions of affection and showing interest in children's academic and personal growth. Finally, "perhaps even occasional doses of caprice and serendipity" aid in academic success (Walberg, 1984, p.400).

Bloom (1984) found that similar practices and values stimulate student achievement. These practices included the work habits and schedules of the family, parental guidance and assistance readily available, parental expectations and academic aspirations, and intellectual stimulation.

In both the Bloom and Walberg studies, "these family practices were more prevalent in higher socioeconomic status homes, but when lower socioeconomic status parents engaged in these activities, their children also were more likely to express school success" (Chrispeels, 1996, p. 301).

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Several barriers to parent involvement have been identified by both parents and teachers. The National PTA (1996) describes the most common barriers as the lack of time, not being valued, and not knowing how to contribute. Further barriers to parent involvement include not understanding the educational system, childcare difficulties, language, cultural differences, and transportation difficulties. Additionally, parents often do not feel welcomed. Low literacy levels, educational jargon, snobbery, boring meetings, and parents who have unmet needs themselves are also barriers to parent involvement.

Distance between parents and teachers, lack of teacher training, and barriers of race and class have been identified as barriers (Moore, 1991). Often, minority parents are not included in activities because of language or cultural differences (Chavkin, 1989). Other barriers originate from beliefs, attitudes, and actions by teachers and schools: lack of commitment, role confusion, concerns with territory, and low expectations from at-risk families. Teachers and schools assuming a passive role in involvement, poor communications on the part of the schools, and schools that focus on negative involvement are definite barriers to parent involvement (Liontos, 1992).

Negative events, problems, or disagreements that cause skirmishes among teachers, parents, and students inflate barriers. Angry parents who are slow to forget are less likely to be involved in their children's education than those who maintain clear heads (Lindle, 1989). Disagreements between parents and teachers have been linked with the length of teachers' service, training, and formality of the teacher (Wagenarr, 1986). Sometimes this has been a result of a "leave it to the school" to do it attitude on

the part of the parents (Liontos, 1992).

A study done by the United States Office of Research and Development (1990) reported that nearly sixty-five percent of parents responded that they had not spoken with school officials regarding their eighth grader's high school academic plans. Only half of the parents had attended any school meeting that year, while only twenty-nine percent of those responding had visited their child's classroom. Fifty-two percent had never discussed their child's grades with a teacher; forty-two percent replied they had not contacted the school about their child's academic performance (White-Clark & Decker, 1996).

Joyce Epstein's (1988) study of at-risk parents in Maryland found that many of the traditional methods of parent involvement do not work. More than one-third of the interview parents had not conferred in any manner with any educator during the school year. Sixty percent of the subjects had not even communicated by telephone. Greater than thirty-five percent of the parents surveyed had never attended a parent-teacher conference. Seventy percent of the parents interviewed had never assisted with any type of activity in their child's classroom and only four percent had spent more than twenty-five days participating at a school (White-Clark & Decker, 1996).

The lack of parent involvement has also been a great concern in the preschool years. A study by Michigan State University on Head Start parent involvement activities showed that only a core of parents provided most of the volunteer hours. The study estimated only three of four parents participated (Children's Defense Fund, 1984). Additionally, another study found that an average of those parents who were involved in their child's Head Start program was less than one hour per week (Zigler &

Muenchow, 1992).

In summary, the factors that inhibit parent involvement by some parents include: school practices that do not accommodate the wide diversity of the families it serves, time and childcare restraints, any negative experiences with schools, the school's lack of support for cultural diversity, and the primacy of basic needs of parents and families (Freedman, Ascheim, & Zerchykov, 1989).

Increasing Levels of Parent Involvement

Ample information exists about how to improve or increase parent involvement in schools. Several researchers have systematically investigated and identified successful parent involvement programs in a variety of settings. Some are listed or summarized within this section.

The Geraldine Dodge Foundation (1996) developed a list of ten tips for school principals to increase parental involvement in schools. The list includes using a committee approach to develop involvement initiatives, recruiting parents for a volunteer program, and offering "family" programs in math, science, reading, and technology. Also included are tips to make favorable first impressions with parents and guides developed to help young children learn. Home-school connections newsletters sent home on a regularly scheduled basis aid parents with tips for activities to do at home. Videos and handouts made specifically for parent training on self-esteem, reading techniques, responsibility, motivating children, and suggestions for talking with the children are available from the Parent Institute.

Other tips contained in the principal's list include sending folders home every Friday with student's work from the week and communication forms for parents and teachers to use. Single sheet brochures as guidelines describing specific learning outcomes in non-threatening educational jargon should be made available for every grade level. Commercially made brochures that describe activities to do at home with children are also available (Dodge Foundation, 1996).

Ten factors central to urban parent involvement programs include: leadership, accessibility, time, cultural awareness, active teacher roles, public recognition, broad-based support, adolescent focus, and recognition of parents as people (Jackson & Cooper, 1992). Although these practices pertained to high school in the study, the implications are universal.

Likewise, although the strategies identified by Berla, Henderson, and Kerewsky (1989) were set for middle school parents, the approach has been suitable for parents of children at all levels. These strategies include: developing a policy for parental involvement, making certain that at least one person in the school knows each child well, maintaining a friendly and open school office, encouraging parent-to-parent communications, hiring a full-time parent connate coordinator, having a parent room within the school, determining and meeting family needs for services, and providing translation services when needed.

Simple strategies using a common sense approach to involve parents suggested by Fredricks and Rasindki (1990) include flooding the parents with information, making it a school-wide effort, and recognizing students and parents. Students become involved in recruiting parents. Schools conduct participatory projects that include the entire

family,

recruit community members, and find out why parents are not involved. The classrooms and the school are made a comfortable place for students, parents, and staff to work and meet. Teachers use the telephone as an instrument of good news, while volunteers operate a parent hotline. A variety of event-scheduling plans are in place. The schools provide support services like babysitting. They suggest the use of community members to endorse the school programs. Finally, programs are videotaped for parents unable to attend meetings.

Schurr (1992) suggested sixteen parent involvement strategies that schools should practice. Involve parents in goal setting, contracting, and evaluating programs. Involve parents in the assessment of school policies and practices. Open a parent lounge or resource room in schools. Develop public information displays, public service messages and work site seminars where parents wil' ' .e access to the information. Develop a parent handbook for each school that contains guidelines and tips for involvement as well as school rules. Hold a public information fair at times parents may attend. Have a parent and student exchange day each year. Award students with extra academic credit for parent involvement. Hold an old-fashioned family night at school. Develop a schoolwide communications plan with parents' input. Parent and teacher dialog journals should be maintained for communication purposes. Individual schools and school systems participate in official parent proclamation effort. Schools can assemble monthly home achievement packets for parents. School personnel conduct home visits for bond or levy elections. Develop, explain, and enforce a schoolwide homework policy. Finally, have meet-and-greet programs for involvement.

Williams and Chavkin (1989) of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory identified seven elements essential to effective parent involvement. They include having written policies, administrative support, specific training for parents and staff, using a partnership approach, maintaining two-way communication, networking, and frequent evaluation of the programs.

Lastly, Joyce Epstein's work for the United States Department of Education (1994) showed the efforts of developing parental partnerships has been "meager". For an estimate of twenty-five dollars a year per student, a school could develop a viable parent program with a salaried coordinator. Ten dollars per pupil at the district level and an additional five dollars at the state level would establish the structure needed to improve family and school connections.

Conclusion

"Common themes appear in much of the research. Lists of suggestions hold many things in common: parent rooms, communication, parenting workshops, and activities" (Jesse, 1996, p.11). Less frequently mentioned are parents in roles of advocates or decision-makers (Jesse, 1996). Galletta and White (1992), upon examining eighteen parental involvement programs, found common characteristics to include strong commitment to disadvantaged and low-income parents, external institutions providing sponsorship and evaluation, both private and public sector support in significant amounts, a genuine commitment to narrow the gap between home and school cultures, and empowering parents in the process.

The more actively parents participate in the different aspects of their children's schooling, whether it be as advocates, in decision-making, as classroom volunteers, or as home teachers, the better it is for student achievement (Gordon, 1978). Creating home environments that promote learning, parents who have high but not unrealistic expectations for their children's achievement and future, and those parents who become involved in their children's education both at school and in the community are the most accurate predictors of a student's achievement in school (Henderson, 1994).

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether parental involvement in children's education has a positive effect on student achievement. This study was important for designing and implementing appropriate parent involvement activities to be used within the school, which increase student achievement.

Subjects

Lumberport Elementary School is located in the Eagle district of northern Harrison County, West Virginia. The school serves 350 kindergarten through fifth grade children. Families served by the school live in the country, very small villages, and a small town. Children live as far away as sixteen miles from the school. The majority of children ride the school bus daily.

Lumberport Elementary School has been a school-wide Title I school for three consecutive years. The rate of free and reduced lunches served to the children averages seventy percent. There are seventeen classrooms. There are three classrooms for each grade level, with the exception of two fourth grades during the 1997 – 1998 term. Average class size has been twenty-one students overall. The highest average has been

twenty-five in fourth grade.

Lumberport Elementary School has an active PTA, holds evening parent teacher conferences twice a year as required by the county system, maintains a local school improvement council as mandated by the state, and utilizes parent volunteers in the building. Lumberport Elementary School began participating in the Appalachia Regional Educational Lab QUEST program on continuous school improvement during the 1997 – 1998 school year.

The research group consisted of one of each second, third, fourth, and fifth grades classes. The group was randomly selected. SAT9 data were evaluated from students in each of those classes for the previous year, 1997, and for the current year, 1998.

There were eighteen second grade students, twenty-one third graders, twenty-four fourth grade children, and twenty-two fifth graders included in the control group. From the eighty-five subjects, forty were randomly selected for the sample. This represented twenty-four percent of the total student body and thirty-six percent of those meeting the requirements for participation in the study. The forty students selected met the following criteria: they had been a student at Lumberport for the two years included in the study, had valid SAT9 test results for both years, and parents had returned the completed likert scale parent involvement instrument (attached in the appendices.) Gender, age, name, previous teachers, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status were not factors in selection of subjects for the study.

Design

A correlational study was conducted to determine whether parent involvement

affected student achievement among the subjects. The independent variable was parent involvement; the dependent variable was student achievement. Other variables were not indicative to this study.

H_O: There would be no significant gains in academics for students whose parents were involved in their education.

H_1: Children whose parents have been involved in their education would show greater gain academically.

Procedures

Data for the study were collected and analyzed from the parent involvement scale submitted by parents. Each scale was scored from 0.0 to 5.0 for each year of the study. The mean score for each scale was used to determine scores used in the study. Subjects were assigned a number to assure likert scale results correlated with SAT9 results. Assigned numbers were three digits, the first corresponding to grade level, the remaining digits corresponding to order. For example, '203' was student three in second grade. Each classroom teacher administered SAT9 tests in March 1997 and March/April 1998, following directions specified in the manuals. The 1997 scores were treated as the pretest and the 1998 scores were treated as the posttest for this study. These tests were scored by means determined by the state department of education. The study encompassed SAT9 test scores and parental involvement likert scale results for one school year.

Instrumentation

Following research of parent involvement studies previously completed, a likert

scale of fifteen statements was developed for parents to complete. The scale was adapted from an existing parent survey designed by researcher Joyce Epstein. The scale, offered parents a rating of one, being low, to five, being high on fifteen questions taken from work by Joyce Epstein and the Arkansas PTA. A copy of the likert scale survey is located in the appendices. Parents answered the instruments' questions for both years included in the study. Two hundred twenty-five completed scales were returned from parents schoolwide, a 64.28 percent rate of return.

SAT9 tests were administrated as required by the West Virginia State Department and the Harrison County Schools. Upon scoring by the state department, the subjects' scores were evaluated. Scores for total basic skills were included in the data. Percentile scores were used as data, as recommended by the local county testing coordinator.

A t-test for nonindependent means was conducted on results of the likert scale because the two sets of scores came from the same group of students. Likewise, a t-test for nonindependent means was conducted for the SAT9 scores because the two sets of scores came from the same group of students.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient method of measurement was used to determine the extent to which the two variables were related among the subjects.

Summary

This chapter was designed to represent the research methodology and procedures used to correlate parent involvement with student achievement.

Chapter Four:
Results and Findings

Introduction

Chapter four discusses the results of the study on parent involvement and student achievement at Lumberport Elementary School. The subjects, design, and the findings of the study are discussed.

Subjects

Four classrooms, one each of second, third, fourth, and fifth grades were randomly selected to participate in the study. Ten students who met the requirements for the study were randomly selected from each of the classes. Subjects were required to have been a student at Lumberport Elementary School for the two consecutive years of the study, have returned the parent involvement likert scale, and had valid SAT9 achievement test scores for both years.

The forty subjects were selected from the control group of eighty-five students. Table I illustrates the breakdown of the subjects by class.

Table I
Subjects of the Study

Classroom	Number of Students	Likert Scales Returned	Percent of Scales Returned	Number of Subjects Selected
2	18	16	88.8%	10
3	21	19	90.4%	10
4	24	15	62.5%	10
5	22	10	45.4%	10
Totals:	85	60	70.58%	40

The table shows 88.8 percent, or sixteen of the participating second grade class returned likert scales. Nineteen of twenty-one third graders, or 90.4 percent, returned the scales. Sixty-two and five tenths percent (62.5%) of the fourth grade students, or fifteen of the twenty-four, returned likert scales. Ten of the twenty-two fifth grade subjects, or 45.4 percent, returned completed likert scales. Overall, 70.58% of the control group returned completed parent involvement likert scales. The numbers represent forty-seven percent of the total population of the control group. It also represents twenty-four percent of the entire student body and thirty-six percent of those meeting the requirements for participation in the study.

Ten subjects were randomly selected from each classroom. This number was chosen because the fifth grade class returned only ten likert scales. It was the intent to show an equal representation from each selected classroom.

Design

Means were taken from results of the likert scales completed by the parents. Table II illustrates the results.

Table II
Likert Scale Summary

	1996 – 1997	1997 – 1998
Number	40	40
Mean	3.7669	3.9102
Standard Deviation	0.70867	0.51208

As shown in Table II, the 1996 – 1997 parent involvement likert scale mean was 3.7669 and the standard deviation *s* equaled 0.70867. The 1997 – 1998 likert scale mean was 3.9102 with a standard deviation *s* of 0.71560.

Data for the SAT9 test results are shown in Table III.

Table III
SAT9 Summary

	1996 – 1997	1997 – 1998
Number	40	40
Mean	61.200	65.925
Standard Deviation	25.786	23.901

As displayed in Table III, the SAT9 tests provided means of 61.200 for 1996 – 1997, with a standard deviation of 25.786. A mean of 65.925 and standard deviation of 23.901was determined for the1997 – 1998 SAT9 data.

A nonindependent *t*-test was conducted on both sets of data to determine statistical significance.

Table IV
T-test Results

	1996 – 1997	1997 - 1998
Test Statistic, *t*	-14.2048	-16.5425
Critical *t*	+/-2.0227	+/-2.0227

Using the data for 1996 – 1997, it was determined the test statistic *t* was -14.2048, the critical *t* was +/- 2.0227, with a significance of $p < .05$. The P-value was zero. The ninety-five percent confidence interval was: $-65.61 < \mu_d < -49.25$. Thus, the null hypothesis, H_o. There were no significant gains in academics for students whose parents were involved in their education, was rejected.

The 1997 – 1998 data determined the statistic *t* was –16.5425, the critical *t* was +/- 2.0227, with a significance of $p < .05$. The P-value was zero. The ninety-five percent confidence interval was: $-69.40 < \mu_d < -54.28$. Thus, the null hypothesis H_o: There were no significant gains in academics for students whose parents were involved in their education, was rejected for the data.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient was used to measure strength of the linear relationship between parent involvement likert scale results and SAT9 test scores. The critical *r* was 0.31201 for both sets of data. Data showed the degree of freedom as 38. For the 1996 – 1997 data, the correlation coefficient *r* was 0.31542. The correlation coefficient *r* for 1997 – 1998 data was 0.33030. The null hypothesis H_o: There were no significant gains in academics for students whose parents were involved in their education, was rejected for both sets of data.

Scatter diagrams for the data display a positive relationship between the paired *x* (parent involvement) and *y* (student achievement) values. The correlation was

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significant.

Summary

T-tests for the likert scales and SAT9 data both rejected the null hypothesis of H_O: There were no significant gains in academics for students whose parents were involved in their education. Linear correlation coefficient measures of the data presented for both test years indicate the null hypothesis was rejected, thus accepting the alternate hypothesis of H_1: Children whose parents have been involved in their education have shown greater gain academically. As each of the statistical tests performed rejected the null hypothesis, it is concluded that parent involvement does have a positive effect on student achievement.

Chapter 5:
Conclusion

The intent of this study was to show that children whose parents have been involved in their education have shown greater gain academically. The null hypothesis was rejected by evidence presented from the *t*-tests and correlational study. The alternate hypothesis was accepted.

If this study were to be replicated, some changes could produce a higher level of correlation. A larger sample of students and parents would offer greater insight and a higher level of data accuracy. Parents could be asked to complete the likert scale when attending required conference at school rather than sending the scales home to be completed. This would provide a larger group from which to draw the sample. Students could be randomly selected from a primary grade and an intermediate grade. This would likely show the degree of difference of involvement at various grade levels. Another adaptation that could improve the study would be to track a specific group of children whose parents are actively involved in the daily operations of the school with a group of children whose parents are never seen at school. It is anticipated that all modifications would produce similar results.

As stated in the limitations, the study was based on enrollment at one school with a limited number of subjects. Similar findings would prevail in most schools in the country, as the literature on parent involvement clearly shows. The study was important because it applied current research to statistical tests on local students. The results

clearly show the direction by which schools must travel to increase student achievement.

Recommendations because of this study include encouraging greater involvement through parent training sessions and staff development seminars. Many effective means of involvement have been discussed in the literature. Inclusion of parents in local decision-making is in tune with suggestions offered in the literature.

Researchers such as Joyce Epstein have provided preponderance amounts of literature to aid schools, families, and communities with involvement issues. The literature clearly defines the types of parent involvement and offers solutions to barriers that inhibit involvement. Individuals, schools, and entire educational communities must become actively involved in finding means to garner greater parent involvement for the benefit of the children.

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Parent Involvement Check-up

Parent's Initials: _____ Student's first name: _____ Teacher/Grade:_____

Please rate your involvement in your children's education as you see it. Rate 1-5 with "1" being **low** or **not true**, and "5" being **high** and **true.** Please circle your answers. Please complete the scale for last school year and this year.

	1996-1997	1997-1998
! know my children's teachers by name.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I know my children's class schedule.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I attend scheduled conferences which provide information about my children.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I initiate contact with the teachers about my children.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I follow up on messages which the teacher sends me about my children or the school.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I attend school functions which involve my children.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I attend PTA or other parent-teacher meetings.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I read with my children on a daily basis.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I speak up for the school in my community.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I try to help my children in a positive way with their homework.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I look over and express concern for my children's work which they bring home.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I send my children to school clean, rested, and well fed.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I volunteer for my children's classroom (in classroom, materials preparation, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I take my children to the library and to other places which help in educating them.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
I try to portray a positive attitude about schools and education to my children.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

This form adapted from education researcher Joyce Epstein's work.
Your comments are welcomed on the back of this form.